

To: Senator Doyle and Representative Walker  
Human Services Committee

From: Pamela Fields  
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I am the Executive Director at the Arc of Meriden Wallingford, Board member at CCPA and a family member to several people with developmental disabilities and Mental Illness. I am here to talk about SB 282 "Implementation of an attendance Based Reimbursement System"

This reimbursement system was designed through a Medicaid waiver. It operates on a fee for service and is reimbursed through attendance. When this system was designed, providers such as the Arc, a low wage provider, were and still are operating below the rates. Meaning that we are getting reimbursed below the rates listed on the waiver. Receiving these lower rates we are still required to provide the same service and to maintain the same burdensome unfunded mandates and regulations as fully funded providers. Our Agency and others like us were told we would be made whole, before a loss through attendance based reimbursement would affect the agency. We were told that all providers would be on equal ground. This did not happen.

Due to these low rates we are unable to increase our Direct Support Staff to the rate of 14.20 that is used as the base rate for the waiver. The majority of our staff is paid at 11.00 per hour.

An attendance based reimbursement system should be studied prior to implementation, making sure that the system is put in place in a way that enhances the services, meets the needs of the individuals and protects the state's safety net.

The figures for my agency for one month following the rates of the attendance based reimbursement system show a loss of over \$22,000. This loss is mostly due to individuals who are medically fragile and elderly and who either choose not to venture out in poor weather or have doctor's orders that prevent them from going out, people with the flu and just bad winter weather.

A system that penalizes agencies for providing services to its most medically fragile population will deter any Agency from providing services to these individuals in the future.

I want you to know that the philosophy of this system has led to greater choice and portability for our individuals. This aspect is a positive outcome for all individuals with developmental disabilities, however if the implementation is not done in a holistic manner it may collapse the safety net that Connecticut has taken years to construct and cost the state millions more in revenue.

I am asking you to hold off on implementation of this system until it is clear that the implementation method is safe for individuals with disabilities and for the state as a whole. With the fiscal mess we are in we really do not need another thing that will negatively affect our economy or our citizens.

I would also like to comment on HB 5245 "Task force to Study Privatization of Group Homes". In this economy we need to find any means we can to assure the citizens of Connecticut that we are providing services in the most cost effective manner available. If a task force were developed for this area the state would be able to look at a long term solution in a very plan full way that would be beneficial to all parties involved. The Arc of Meriden Wallingford has been involved in two of the present homes going through this process. One is already complete and I have to say it was a challenging but a successful process. The individuals seem happy and with both parties working together there was little disruption to the lives of the people in the home. Please consider putting this task force into place in order to assure that these conversions will be conducted in a way that is best for all parties involved and assuring that the state maximizes every opportunity it has to run efficiently and effectively

Thank you for allowing me to comment on these two areas that are of importance to me and the individuals our Agency provides services to. I do not envy you; all of you have a very tough job to do. I wish you good luck and offer my assistance in any way I can to assist you in this process.